EFFECTS OF THE PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN PROGRAM THROUGH THE COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY METHOD ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP SKILLS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

To investigate the effect of *community of inquiry* method on improvement of interpersonal relationship skills, based on Matthew Lipman's theory and practice, an experiment was designed and conducted in Tehran among primary school students of third, fourth and fifth grades. 190 student (97 boys and 93 girls) were randomly selected and assigned to experimental and control group (88 experimental, 102 control). The experimental group was taught based on community of inquiry methodology for twelve ninety minute sessions. Interpersonal relationship skills were measured by Ardly & Asher's questionnaire. Results show that means of both experimental and control group on the pre-test didn't have any significant difference. But, the results of pre-test and post-test of both experimental and control group indicated that the mean of post-test scores of experimental group in relation to pre-test in interpersonal relationship skills increased, while the mean of the control group remained the same in the post-test, and the mean of the experimental group in the post-test was higher than the mean of the control group. In order to investigate the persistence of the treatment effect, the students were rechecked after 4 months, and the results appeared to be stable. Therefore, this semi-experimental study has shown that the community of inquiry method has positively affected interpersonal relationship skills in experimental group of children, with effects that continued for at least 4 months after the treatment.

Key words: philosophy for children; community of inquiry; interpersonal relationship

effects of the hilosophy for children program through the community of inquiry method on the improvement of interpersonal relationship skills in primary school students

Efectos del programa de *filosofía para niños* a través del método de la comunidad de investigación para el mejoramiento de las habilidades de relación interpersonal en estudiantes de educación fundamental

Resumen:
Para investigar el efecto del método de la comunidad de investigación para el mejoramiento de las habilidades de relación interpersonal, basado en la teoría y práctica de Matthew Lipman, fue diseñado y conducido un experimento en Teherán entre estudiantes de tercero, cuarto y quinto grado de escuela primaria. Ciento y noventa estudiantes (noventa y siete varones y noventa y tres niñas) fueron seleccionados y divididos en grupo experimental (ochenta y ocho miembros) y grupo control (ciento y dos miembros). Durante doce sesiones de noventa minutos cada una, se enseñó al grupo experimental con base en la metodología de la comunidad de investigación. Las habilidades de relación interpersonal fueron medidas según el cuestionario de Ardly & Asher. Los resultados muestran que los promedios tanto del grupo control como experimental no tenían ninguna diferencia significativa. Pero los resultados del pre-test y post-test tanto de un grupo como otro mostraron que los promedios en los puntajes del post-test para las habilidades de relacionamiento interpersonal crecieron en el grupo experimental, mientras que se mantuvo el mismo en el grupo control: el promedio del grupo experimental fue más alto que el del grupo control. Para investigar la persistencia de este efecto, los estudiantes fueron nuevamente controlados cuatro meses después, y los resultados se mostraron estables. Por lo tanto, este estudio semi-experimental ha mostrado que el método de la comunidad de investigación ha afectado positivamente las habilidades de relación interpersonal en el grupo de niños y niñas experimental, con efectos que se prolongaron por los menos cuatro meses después de las acciones realizadas.

Palabras clave: filosofía para niños; comunidad de investigación; relación interpersonal.

Efeitos do programa de *filosofia para crianças* através do método da comunidade de investigação para o melhoramento das habilidades de relação interpessoal em estudantes do ensino fundamental

Resumo:

Para investigar o efeito do método da comunidade de investigação para o melhoramento das habilidades de relação interpessoal, baseado na teoria e prática de Matthew Lipman, foi projetado e conduzido um experimento em Tehran entre estudantes de terceiro, quanto e quinto ano do ensino fundamental. Cento e noventa estudantes (noventa e seis meninos e noventa e três meninas) foram selecionados e divididos em grupo experimental (oitenta e oito membros) e grupo de controle (cento e dois membros). Durante doze sessões de noventa minutos cada uma, ensinou-se ao grupo experimental com base na metodologia da comunidade de investigação. As habilidades de relação interpessoal foram medidas segundo o questionário de Ardly & Asher. Os resultados mostraram que as médias tanto do grupo de controle como experimental não tinham nenhuma diferença significativa. Contudo, os resultados do pré-teste e do pós-teste, tanto de um grupo quanto de outro, mostraram que as médias nas pontuações do pós-teste para as habilidades de relacionamento interpessoal cresceram no grupo experimental, enquanto que se mantiveram o mesmo no grupo de controle: a média do grupo experimental foi mais alta do que a do grupo de controle. Para investigar a persistência desse efeito, os estudantes foram novamente controlados quatro meses depois, e os resultados se mostraram estáveis. Por tanto, este estudo semi-experimental tem mostrado que o método da comunidade de investigação tem afetado positivamente as habilidades de relação interpessoal no grupo experimental de meninas e meninos, com efeitos que se prolongam por, pelo menos, quatro meses depois das ações realizada.

Palavras chave: filosofia para crianças; comunidade de investigação; relação interpessoal

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Introduction:

Proper social development, communication with others, and the ability to adjust to a variety of circumstances is a main factor in one's happiness. Developing social communication skills is an important element in all cultures and societies. The ability to have influential communication with others is a major element of interpersonal ability. In an educational system, if a child lacks social skills, often he or she is mislabeled as a person with social problems. Disability in social skills can cause problems in educational development, and the lack of these skills and can damage a person's values and self respect and make him/her abnormal or someone different from his peers (Soltani, 2004).

Despite the fact that we live in a social world, most of us have little information for analyzing and processing social experiences and improving our social relationship skills. In addition, there is not much focus on this field in formal education. It is idealistic to think that a school should be a place in which the school staff and children are aware of events that happen in their social interactions and know the role of these interactions in their ideal formulation of themselves and others (Fontana, 2002). In fact, it has been found that children and teenagers having weak communication skills are rarely accepted by their peers (Gotteman, Genzue, Rosmosen 1975). Conversational skills education can increase social popularity among peers and can lead to successful interactions with others, which can improve their self respect in general and the social self in particular (Lade, 1981).

Proper social communication is one of the important aims of public education, so researchers have developed several methods for pre-school and elementary grade children (and even upper grade or children with behavioral disorders) in the frame of educational programming and rehabilitation of social relationship skills which needs a combination of cognitive, emotional and behavioral

elements. One of these methods is group activity. The teacher can enable the development communication skills through efforts to increase children's understanding and sufficiency levels, and through creating the proper context for students' group activities (Kartledge, Frew, Zaharias, 1986).

According to Matthew Lipman, Philosophy for Children novels should be read as models that provide strategies and thinking skills to govern the self. By supplying several instruments that enable the individual to question herself and others, philosophy offers the possibility of learning autonomous thinking. Someone who is able to think for herself/himself can question and doubt his or her own deepest feelings, values and identity (Lipman, 2003).

In order to fulfill this aim, Philosophy for Children is designed to adapt to children's interests and needs, and it is presented in the form of stories that connect the semantic, logical, aesthetic and ethical experience of daily life. On the one hand, the discussion that follows the story—through community of inquiry pedagogy— has the aim of encouraging the children to reflect on the meaning of concepts relevant to ethics and to politics, such as respect, liberty, negotiation, judgment, equality and justice (Vancy legom, 2005). On the other hand, the community of inquiry also gives the children the opportunity to put these concepts into practice— that is, to acquire habits of reflective thinking, of respect for and co-operation with peers, of seeking compromise, of self-correction, of good judgment and so on. The method also involves the development of a number of so-called skills, such as giving good reasons, making good distinctions and connections, making valid inferences, hypothesizing, asking good questions, using and recognizing criteria, calling for relevance, seeking clarification, offering alternative points of view, building logically on the contributions of others, posing counter-examples, asking for reasons, testing and so on (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, 1980; Sharp, 1993). So we can say that the community of inquiry, besides improving children's thinking, has an influence on the entirety of their behavior, especially interpersonal relationships.

Philosophy for Children aims at a radical change in education—from an approach that emphasizes the role of the teacher and is based on knowledge transfer to an approach that puts the child at the centre and emphasizes learning by

discovery and experiment, and the construction of knowledge. Thus, the hierarchical relation between the adult and the child is erased and the child liberated from determination by the systems of schooling. Ambitious claims are made for the significance of democracy here as Philosophy for Children is especially intended to help children think in an autonomous, critical and reasonable way, taking into account the needs and interests of all actors, especially the child herself (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, 1980; Splitter and Sharp, 1995).

The general aim of Philosophy for Children is to include the voices of every member of the community on the grounds that the more voices are heard; the greater the possibility of reaching a general and appropriately representative consensus. According to this view the input of children is of particular value since it is children who keep asking questions when adults have lost the ability to do so. The capacities to use tools and skills, to adopt strategies and to participate and inquire have become basic presuppositions of a democratic society. So too, Philosophy for Children is based on the proposition that critical thinking and dialogue are the necessary conditions for emancipating children from over-determination, and for transforming them into democratic, free citizens (Vancy legom,2005).

Philosophy for children provides opportunities for developing information processing skills, inquiry skills, reasoning skills, creative thinking skills and evaluating skills. These skills include the higher order thinking skills identified in many taxonomies of thinking skills. But skills alone are not enough, what must be added to these and to make them effective are the disposition to use the skills to make a difference. These involve two sets of disposition or attitude which philosophy for children aims to foster. Both derive from the dialogical nature of the process, developing individual skills through co-operative activity. We might call these aspects 'caring', 'collaborative' or ' connected' thinking. It is caring in the sense of taking responsibility for one's own thinking and collaborative in the sense of being open to and connecting with what others think (Fisher 2000b). Co-operative dispositions involve learning to collaborate and cooperate with others in a community of inquiry, building self esteem, empathy and respect towards others (Fisher2001).

Lipman himself makes the comment: 'An education which promotes philosophical research among children is the guarantee of an adult society which is genuinely democratic' (Lipman, in Daniel, Schleifer and Lebouis, 1992). Daniel goes further and states:

> The community of inquiry helps the young take their place within the world, it nurtures good habits and strengthens character, it integrates the personal and the common good, it models while serving itself as a paradigm, in short, the community of inquiry represents a positive socialization of the child (Daniel, in Daniel, Schleifer and Lebouis, 1992, p.5).

We shall investigate whether or not dialogue as understood in Philosophy for Children is sensitive to the call of the other and education for interpersonal relationship skills. Dialogue as offered in Philosophy for Children is seen as a form of thinking out loud that is problem-focused, self-correcting, and egalitarian and based on mutual interests; in other words, it is inquiry-based thinking (Splitter and Sharp, 1995).

Furthermore, Splitter and Sharp state that each of the conditions of dialogue embraces the idea of interweaving different perspectives and viewpoints. 'In a dialogical context, children discover that there are many different ways of thinking about a problem, and defining exactly what the problem is will often be part of the problem'(Splitter and Sharp, 1995, p. 12). They state also that when people are engaged in dialogue with one another they are compelled to reflect, to concentrate, to consider alternatives, to listen closely, to give careful attention to definitions and meanings and to recognize previously un-thought opinions. Among the many skills required for building a community of inquiry, those associated with formulating, asking and responding to questions have a special place. Indeed, the reconstruction of the classroom as a dialogical community of inquiry depends largely on the nature and quality of the questions raised by teachers and students. It is not surprising then that Philosophy for Children emphasizes the importance of 'inquiry questions'. These are questions where the questioner seeks something he does not know or have, and where they are construed as an invitation to further inquiry. Whatever response is offered, such questions lead to further questions and responses. These kinds of questions reveal a concern for the questions themselves, and are not meant

for gaining information. They are also known as 'Socratic questions', which implies a kind of 'questioning which probes the underlying logic or structure of our thinking, and assists us to make reasonable judgments' (Splitter and Sharp, 1995, p. 56).

Learning to think in a philosophical way for most of children occurs primarily in interpersonal discussions. In the context of this research, discussion-based pedagogy has an advantage. Children's responses to the characters in the books help them to improve their interests, beliefs and sense of worth. This increased sensitivity is one of the worthiest results of classroom dialogue. Children cannot make a proper judgment about others unless they are insightful about their own nature. If the children couldn't comprehend the context of social rules usage and do not show a tendency towards them, it's not possible to teach social rules unless interpersonal sensitivity is increased and assumed as a prerequisite for children's social pedagogy. In fact, interpersonal intuition should be increased. This intuition is mostly achieved through the successful creation of philosophical dialogue (Ghaedi, 2004).

Buber's (1970) most important contribution to the theory of dialogue is in showing us its structural vulnerability. In fact we would not have the experience or the concept of dialogue without its absence. Buber writes about the stable society -- the society in which all the people live the same life and have mutual communication with that life so they will have mutual communication with eachother--as a result of dialogue. Community of Philosophy Inquiry (CPI) accepts the assertion of commonalities or differences in group dialogue like a double dialogue. The group can be "you" for everybody—the "I-It" changes to "I-you." So the relations will be expanded, since whatever "I" told "It" will changes to "I" tells to "you" or in the other words, all the people. Accordingly the reactions between "I" and "It" will turn to reactions between each person with his or her others (Kennedy 1999).

This theory was acknowledged in the results of research which was done by the "Health and People" department of the Brownstone Social Organization. In this project researchers evaluated the influence of philosophic thought education on children's improvement of oral communication with others. Its main goal was the

improvement of statements of power specifically, for children, speaking and listening skills. After finishing the program, it was clear that their statements of power, expressing ideas and defending their ideas--which are the important elements in interpersonal communication--made notable advancement (Health and People department, 2005).

According to Lipman, the program of teaching philosophy to children is adopted from Deweyan and Vygotskyan theories. While Piaget (1952) portrayed learners as constructing meaning primarily through their own actions on the environment, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of the child's cultural and social contexts as sources of guidance and support for learning. Vygotsky (1962, 1991) assumed that the child brings a desire to act effectively and independently and a capacity to develop higher-level mental functioning to her encounters with the culture (as experienced in interactions with others), but those goals and the means to reach them are culturally determined and learned. The child is active in the learning process but does not act alone. She learns to think by constructing or "co-constructing," and by internalizing progressively more adequate versions of the intellectual "tools" of the culture, which are modelled or actively taught by more advanced others. Vygotskian theory is demonstrated in classrooms in which social interaction is encouraged, where teachers converse with children and use language to mediate their learning, where children are encouraged to express themselves both orally and in writing, and where conversation among members of the group is encouraged and valued (Padiachi, 2003).

Interactions that promote development may involve active "scaffolding", "guided participation" or "building bridges" on the part of an adult or a more experienced peer. The more experienced person assists the child by providing prompts, clues, modelling, questions, strategies, and other supports that allow the child to accomplish tasks she cannot yet accomplish independently. To be effective in promoting the development of the child's own independent, self-regulated action, this assistance must be provided in her "zone of proximal development", a hypothetical psychological area that represents the difference between what the child can already do independently and what she can do with help. This probably

differs with gender according to the individual school and its characteristics (Harji.O. et al, 2001).

Numerous studies in all over the world acknowledge the advantage of philosophy for children programming. However, when speaking of studies that focus exclusively on the influence of this program on communication skills improvement, we can refer to Lotfabadi's essay on necessity and the state of philosophy education and right thinking methods to students for wise decision making in the citizenship field (2007); and to the research of Nowroozi and Derakhshandeh in Tarbiat Modarres University in evaluating the influence of philosophical work with children (2006). These two researchers showed that the students feel stronger in communication skills after this educational program. Also Hess (1975) Gardner (1993) Williams (1993) and others show that children participated in philosophical research group were found to have had a salient improvement in interpersonal communication skills.

The importance of interpersonal communication in children's multidimensional development, and the importance of thought in personal and interpersonal communication--especially in accepting different ideas, and criticizing and evaluating others' ideas before blind acceptance--is undeniable. As such, the present study aims to examine the effect of community of inquiry method on improvement of students interpersonal relationship skills regarding to their age and grade.

Method

Hypothesis and Purpose of Reasearch

The purpose of this research is to study the effect of Community of Inquiry method on developing interpersonal relationship skills among students in grades three to five in Tehran schools. The general hypothesis utilized is:

Community of inquiry method has a positive effect on development of interpersonal relationship skills.

Beside the main hypothesis, the usage of *Community of Inquiry* method, age and gender factor have been studied.

Participants

The present study was carried out in Tehran schools. 190 students (97 girls and 93 boys) were randomly selected and assigned to an experimental (88 persons) and control (102 persons) group from six classes of grade three to five.

Instrument

The Ardly and Asher (1996) questionnaire for evaluation of skills and patterns of social problem-solving was used. This curriculum utilized consisted of six stories each focusing on a vague situation. Each story has a hypothetical situation in which a same-sex peer hurts his peer but the story does not make it clear whether the action was intentional or non-intentional. There is a model story for learning how to respond. Each story is followed by three separate questions. Students were asked to answer questions on a likert-type scale with strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

To measure the internal validity of the test, Cronbach's coefficient of alpha calculated for aggressiveness at 0.90; detachment at 0.85; and for problem solving at 0.94. The result showed that all reliability coefficients are significant at *P<0.001* level.

Procedure

First, students were assigned randomly to two experimental and control groups. Then each student completed an Ardly and Asher interpersonal relationship questionnaire. This was the pre-test for examining non-significant differences between two groups. After that, the experimental group was taught utilizing the community of inquiry method implementing Thinking story books (1, 2 by Philip Cam) for twelve sessions. Each book took about ninety minutes. After reading "Thinking stories" books, they were prompted to ask questions of themselves and others. In this sessions, students in the experimental group were encouraged to participate in thinking, expressing their ideas and listening to others and finally to make sense of abstract concepts with reasoning, conversation, listening, attention, respect and other skills that everyone needs for good thinking. After finishing the sessions,

students took the Ardly & Asher questionnaire again as a post-test. A follow-up study was done 4 months after finishing the earlier study. The children hadn't had any further philosophy-based lessons.

Results

Table 1.presents the result of t-test for effect of the treatment according to educational grades and gender

Table1. Comparison of mean deference of pre-test/ post-test scores of experimental and control groups

Table 1

Group	Number		Mean Difference		Std. Error		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the	
	control	Trial	control	Trial	control	Trial						Upper Bound	Lower Bound
Third girls	11	13	-/18	5/38	2/08	3/01	5/15	22	/001	5/56	1/07	7/80	3/32
fourth girls	17	14	/70	5/57	1/64	3/75	4/81	29	/001	4/86	1/09	6/93	2/80
Fifth girls	23	15	1/17	4/48	1/94	2/47	5/13	36	/001	3/69	/71	5/15	2/23
Third boy	20	17	/30	6/35	2/25	3/06	6/92	35	/001	6/05	/87	7/82	4/27
fourth boy	13	14	/61	7	2/10	3/5	5/67	25	/001	6/38	1/12	8/70	4/06
Fifth boy	18	15	2/11	6/86	2/56	2/87	5/02	31	/001	4/75	/94	6/68	2/82

As it is shown in Table 2, the ratio of *t-test* for experimental is higher than control for the entire groups and is significant at *P<0.001* level. Therefore, the main hypothesis was confirmed.
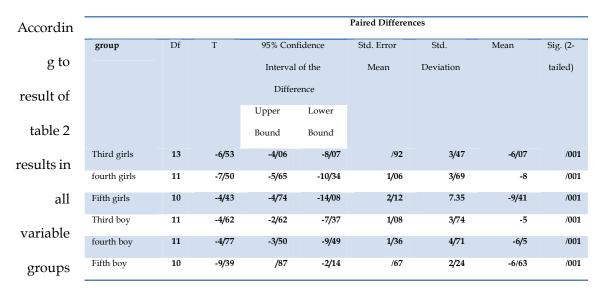
Table 2.Follow-up study of persistence effect of treatment after 4 months

group	Df	T	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Std. Error Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Paired Differences								
			Upper Bound	Lower Bound				
Third girls	13	-6/53	-4/06	-8/07	/92	3/47	-6/07	/001
fourth girls	11	-7/50	-5/65	-10/34	1/06	3/69	-8	/001
Fifth girls	10	-4/43	-4/74	-14/08	2/12	7.35	-9/41	/001
Third boy	11	-4/62	-2/62	-7/37	1/08	3/74	-5	/001
fourth boy	11	-4/77	-3/50	-9/49	1/36	4/71	-6/5	/001
Fifth boy	10	-9/39	/87	-2/14	/67	2/24	-6/63	/001

According to result of table 2 results in all variable groups have been persisted for 4 months.

Table3: Between Groups Comparison of Interpersonal Relationships by Gender

(sig) Boy	(J) Boy	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Upper Bound	Lower Bound
Experimental boy	Con.boy	5.69778(*)	.53562	.000	7.0863	4.3092
	Exp. girl	1.45549	.56218	.050	2.9129	-.0019
	Con. girl	5.99190(*)	.53562	.000	7.3805	4.6034
Control boy	Exp. boy	-5.69778(*)	.53562	.000	-4.3092	-7.0863
	Exp. girl	-4.24230(*)	.54887	.000	-2.8194	-5.6652
	Con. girl	.29412	.52163	.943	1.6464	-1.0582
Experimental girl	Exp. boy	-1.45549	.56218	.050	.0019	-2.9129
	Con.boy	4.24230(*)	.54887	.000	5.6652	2.8194
	Con. girl	4.53641(*)	.54887	.000	5.9593	3.1135
Control girl	Exp. boy	-5.99190(*)	.53562	.000	-4.6034	-7.3805
	Con.boy	-.29412	.52163	.943	1.0582	-1.6464
	Exp. girl	-4.53641(*)	.54887	.000	-3.1135	-5.9593

According to the results in Table 3, we can observe that male trial group does not show a significant difference when compared with female trial group when comparing

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interpersonal skills, while a significant difference was found within the control groups (both males and females).

Table4. Between Groups Comparison of interpersonal relationship by grade.

(I) age	(J) age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Upper Bound	Lower Bound
Third trial	Third control	5.80430(*)	.68701	.000	7.7829	3.8257
	Fourth trial	-.17011	.69856	1.000	1.8417	-2.1820
	Fourth control	5.27816(*)	.69856	.000	7.2900	3.2663
	Fifth trial	.06667	.69261	1.000	2.0614	-1.9281
	Fifth control	4.34797(*)	.64449	.000	6.2041	2.4919
Third control	Third trial	-5.80430(*)	.68701	.000	-3.8257	-7.7829
	Fourth trial	-5.97442(*)	.69300	.000	-3.9786	-7.9702
	Fourth control	-.52614	.69300	.974	1.4697	-2.5220
	Fifth trial	-5.73763(*)	.68701	.000	-3.7591	-7.7162
	Fifth control	-1.45633	.63845	.207	.3824	-3.2951
Fourth trial	Third trial	.17011	.69856	1.000	2.1820	-1.8417
	Third control	5.97442(*)	.69300	.000	7.9702	3.9786
	Fourth control	5.44828(*)	.70445	.000	7.4771	3.4195
	Fifth trial	.23678	.69856	.999	2.2486	-1.7751
	Fifth control	4.51808(*)	.65087	.000	6.3926	2.6436
Fourth control	Third trial	-5.27816(*)	.69856	.000	-3.2663	-7.2900
	Third control	.52614	.69300	.974	2.5220	-1.4697
	Fourth trial	-5.44828(*)	.70445	.000	-3.4195	-7.4771
	Fifth trial	-5.21149(*)	.69856	.000	-3.1997	-7.2233
	Fifth control	-.93019	.65087	.709	.9443	-2.8047
Fifth trial	Third trial	-.06667	.69261	1.000	1.9281	-2.0614
	Third control	5.73763(*)	.68701	.000	7.7162	3.7591
	Fourth trial	-.23678	.69856	.999	1.7751	-2.2486
	Fourth control	5.21149(*)	.69856	.000	7.2233	3.1997
	Fifth control	4.28130(*)	.64449	.000	6.1374	2.4252

Fifth control	Third trial	-4.34797(*)	.64449	.000	-2.4919	-6.2041
	Third control	1.45633	.63845	.207	3.2951	-.3824
	Fourth trial	-4.51808(*)	.65087	.000	-2.6436	-6.3926
	Fourth control	.93019	.65087	.709	2.8047	-.9443
	Fifth trial	-4.28130(*)	.64449	.000	-2.4252	-6.1374

Tuky's HSD test shows that there is no significant difference between the outcome of the two groups' interpersonal communication skills in each of the three educational grades, but all three grades have significant difference with students in grade 3, 4, and 5 who didn't participate in this program. There is also no significant difference between students in control groups with students in three grades.

Discussion

According to data given in table No.1, the average marks of student's interpersonal communication skills, had a salient increase in next three grades, and showed a significant difference with the control group. These results support other researcher's findings e.g. Kate Topping who showed that children's involvement in philosophical inquiry helps them to achieve specific advantages such as improvement of communication skills and engagement in social behaviors. Group questioning and participation in groups has numerous advantages for children because this method allows them to develop their social, cognitive, oral and communicational relationship skills, and creates conditions to face and overcome shyness (Farrokhmehr, 2004)

Philosophy for children is designed to be adapted to children needs, and is presented in stories which connects the meanings of logical, aesthetic and moral life experience together. Current research aims to study children and their reactions toward related ideas with ethics and politics like respecting parents, freedom, negotiation, judgment, equality and justice. This in fact gives children the opportunity to connect their ideas with their actions, and to learn reflective habits of thought, to respect each other's ideas and collaborate in evaluating them, to pursue healthy comnpromise, and exercise self control and cultivate good judgment. (Lipman 2003).

These results are in contrast to the results of the project "Violence Prevention and Philosophy for children) carried out by Philip Constantine at Laval university in Quebec, where there was no significant difference between groups before and after participation in cases of social communication skill, but after precise analysis it showed that 49.5% had a meaningful increase, 49.5% had a meaningful decrease and 1% had no change (http://www.latraversee-pvphie.com/index.asp?section=4_1_3_1,2003). However Ghara Maleki (2004) believes that, after participation in philosophy classes, children are more able to express their ideas without self-censorship.

Our research concluded in table 2 that participation in philosophy for children classes could continue its effect on student's interpersonal communication skills at least for 4 months both on females and males in each three educational grade. This result is also similar with the results of Tricky and Topping (2005). They have been done a three year research study on 150 students at grade 4 of elementary school for evaluating philosophical thought. They held one hour "philosophy for children" classes during 16 weeks in the first year and two years later. They found increasing student ability in verbal and non-verbal behaviors, and an improvement in logical reasoning.

Vygotsky also stressed the importance of interaction and mutual communication among peers and argued that this task will develop children' capacity for intelligence, so we can say that a child gets experience through communication with peers, internalizes her social interactions, and arranges them in order to enhance both social communication and self-respect (Vygotsky, 1962). On the other hand, table 3 shows that males communication skills has no significant difference with that of females in test groups but it has significant difference with control groups both in girls and boys. There is no significance difference between girls and boys in the control group. It means that boys and girls who participated in the philosophy for children program experienced equal growth in interpersonal communication. This was also the result of Constantine's research—he found no differences between girls and boys. And Hess (1975) in Australia, who conducted research on two groups with 200 samples--which were publicized in 1980--reported

meaningful development in reading, critical thinking, and interpersonal communication.

The results of table 4 indicate that no significant difference between experimental groups in each of the three grades was found, and also that there was no significant difference between the three grades with students who did not participate in this program. This would suggest that student participation in philosophical inquiry groups leads to a salient development in communication skills regardless of educational level. In a similar research project, Williams (1993) evaluated the impact of 27 sessions of Philosophy for Children on 15 students between 10 to 13 years old in comparison with 17 students who did not participate in P4C classes. By the end of the term, teachers reported improvements in students' interpersonal relationships, ability to listen to others' ideas, reduction of anger, and underestimation of other student.

Individuals learn about the world through their experiences and social interactions. Some researchers believe that social-emotional development is more effective than cognitive development in determining a person's ability to adjust in school and his life. Since imitation of others plays a role in social development, modeling others' behaviors, especially peers, can be effective in this field (Imani, 2007). Kennedy (1999) believes that philosophical inquiry is an endless process because of the human ontological situation of multiple standpoints When real dialogue takes place among people, there is a proper situation for growth and an absence of reproach or blaming. In this situation, we can take risks. In this situation children learn both to communicate with others, and to draw on their own cognitive creativity. Kennedy claims that children are fully capable of participating in philosophical conversation—a claim also present in Socrates' thought. And we can claim as a result of the present study that involvement in communities of philosophical inquiry can improve students' interpersonal skills. A recommendation for further research would be that other researchers pay more attention to using this methodology with children and evaluate it as it affects other aspects of educational experience. Educational managers, teachers and consultants in schools can benefit from the advantages of this program, as is indicated by this research.

effects of the hilosophy for children program through the community of inquiry method on the improvement of interpersonal relationship skills in primary school students

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